

issues relating to the broken promise and the military grassroots continues to make its collective voice heard. In 1999, thousands of retirees across the country came together when I introduced the Keep Our Promise to America's Military Retirees Act. This was the first legislation in Congress that addressed the broken promise head-on. By writing letters and e-mails to newspapers and Congress and by posting billboards across the country, military retirees made their voices heard. In just one year, the voice of the military retirees grassroots, united loud and clear around the legislation, forced Congress to act. Congress enacted TRICARE for Life, which restored much of the promises of lifetime health care for retirees over the age of 65.

TFL, as it is known, was a significant achievement for many military retirees over 65, but much more needs to be done to restore the promise of military health care to many more of our retired uniformed personnel. For too many retired military personnel, the military health care system currently in place does not provide the level of quality care they have been promised, earned and deserve. A new coalition representing military retirees has emerged to challenge the government to provide that health care. They call themselves the MRGRG, the Military Retiree Grassroots Group. These retirees do not have a formal organization or membership but are all over the country wired together via the Internet. The MRGRG's goal is to achieve full restoration of the broken promise now and have it done this year.

Recently, nine MRGRG members, recognized as leaders in the retiree movement, drafted a white paper on military health care. The 200-page white paper spells out the retirees' case clearly and in great detail. At their own expense, MRGRG members have reproduced and hand-delivered white paper binders and CDs to every member of the House and Senate. Like Colonel Day's group, the MRGRG represents exactly what our Founding Fathers intended, American citizens acting freely and of their own will, telling their elected representatives what they ought to do.

The good people of CAG and MRGRG are already heroes—they fought to defend the freedoms we all enjoy, and they made a career doing it. And now they are heroes all over again, setting an example for all of us by showing how democracy is supposed to work and by making it work exactly the way our Founding Fathers intended.

Our Founding Fathers would be proud of today's military retirees' faith in our democratic institution. I know I am. God bless them, and God Bless America.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida (Mrs. THURMAN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mrs. THURMAN addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

#### THE NATIONAL DEBT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Mississippi (Mr. TAYLOR) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. TAYLOR of Mississippi. Mr. Speaker, as we read about the scandals in the private sector and as we hear the President go to Wall Street to try to get them to do a better job with their accounting practices, it strikes me that the President would have much better spent his time if he had given that speech here in these halls. You see, as we talk about false billing and cooking the books going on on Wall Street, there is no more false billing and there is no bigger cooking of the books than right here in the halls of Congress and in the other body. I guess the average American would be dumfounded to know that the taxes that they pay every month called FICA, their Social Security taxes, they think is being set aside for their Social Security, would they not be surprised to find out that as of this moment, our Nation owes the Social Security trust fund \$1.3 trillion. There is not a penny in that account, nothing but an IOU of some government securities. Folks who pay taxes know that on that pay stub is a tax for Medicare. They presume it is being set aside to pay for their medical expenses when they get older. They would be shocked to find out that as of this moment, if you could find that imaginary lockbox, that we owe the Medicare trust fund \$271 billion. For folks back home, I realize a billion is a lot of money, so I walk you through it the way I have to remind myself. A billion is a thousand times a thousand times a thousand, and in this instance again times 271 is how much is owed to the Medicare trust fund.

Every year money is taken out of the Department of Defense budget with the promise that it will be set aside to pay military retirement pay. I am sure that after what the gentleman from Mississippi (Mr. SHOWS) said, and rightly so, that they would be aghast to find out that if you were to find the so-called military retiree fund, all you would find there is an IOU for a thousand times a thousand times a thousand times 168.

The civil servants, the people on the Border Patrol, the people who work for Customs, the FBI agents who are out there trying to find kidnapped kids, the ATF agents who get shot at on a regular basis trying to keep violent people from building bombs that would harm other Americans, they have a retirement plan. They pay into it. The government pays into it. That money is supposed to be set aside just to pay for their retirement. If they could find that mythical lockbox, they would find that what is missing is a thousand times a thousand times a thousand times 540. \$540 billion.

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In fact, I guess the average Joe would be a little surprised that after coming

to Congress and promising to balance the books, that in the approximately 1,286 days that DENNIS HASTERT has been the Speaker of the House, that the Federal debt has grown by \$511,040,208,939.15, which is more debt than was accumulated in this country from the day that George Washington became President until 1975. Our Nation went for almost 199 years and accumulated only as much debt since DENNIS HASTERT has been Speaker.

I say that to express my severe disappointment that in those 1,286 days, Speaker HASTERT has not allowed, and he sets the schedule for floor debate; only bills that he approves come to the floor and bills that he disapproves do not come to the floor. He has never set a day of debate for a Balanced Budget Amendment to the Constitution of the United States. So that regardless of which party, be they Democrats, be they Republicans, or whoever is controlling the House, and regardless of which party controls the Senate, and regardless of who is the President, they are going to spend no more money than is collected in taxes.

In the 23 years my daughter has been alive, this Nation has added \$5 trillion to that debt. We could have gone all the way from the day George Washington became President to the day Ronald Reagan became President and our Nation was only \$1 trillion in debt. In just 23 years, this much has been added. I think the American people are rightly demanding that Congress spend no more than they collect in taxes. Because no good parent would go out and buy a car and say, by the way, I have a 6-year-old child and let them pay for it, plus interest, when they grow up. No good parent would go buy a house, the most expensive house, because they are not going to pay for it, they are going to stick their grandkids with the bill.

That is what you have been doing, Speaker HASTERT; and I think it is time we had a vote on a Balanced Budget Amendment to the Constitution to stop this Congress and stop future Congresses from doing that. This is a message that I am going to deliver every day until we get a vote on the Balanced Budget Amendment.

I want to encourage Americans to check my sources. Because unlike those guys who were talking about big budget surpluses last year, but never followed it up with the facts, I want Americans to check these numbers because they will be as shocked and appalled as I am. So please look for the monthly statement of the public debt, June 2002, under <http://www.publicdebt.treas.gov>, and see for yourselves how broke our Nation is. And then when we hear the politicians ranting and raving about irresponsibility on Wall Street, maybe you will encourage them to look in the mirror.